

EPISODE 114

JG: The Tribe Conference is kind of like a workshop for writers and creatives on how they can grow their audiences, how can they do their craft better, how they can build an audience, how they can figure out how to blog and do online marketing and ultimately, how they can make a living off of their message.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:31.2] AT: Welcome to The Portfolio Life with Jeff Goins. I’m your host, Andy Traub. Jeff believes that every creative should live a portfolio life, a life full of pursuing work that matters, making the difference with your art and discovering your true voice. So Jeff is committed to helping you find, develop and live out your unique world with you so that you too can live a portfolio life.

You know it’s easy to play it safe. It’s easy to make everything about ourselves once we’ve reached a measure of success. So where can take risks? Where is Jeff taking risks? That’s the topic for today’s show.

Here’s my conversation with Jeff Goins.

[EPISODE]

[00:01:12.0] AT: Jeff, I’m excited to attend the Tribe Conference, I know that you are as well.

[00:01:16.2] JG: I am.

[00:01:17.0] AT: Let’s start, because you are never afraid to share your worries. We talked about this in the past, the first one what you worried about. What are you worried about — I don’t want to start the show on a somber note, but let’s just be real. What are you worried about for the second one?

[00:01:33.5] JG: We so talked about this and we'll go ahead and link to this in the show notes so folks could go back and listen to our debrief of the first one. I wrote this blog post basically saying why I'm scared to launch a conference and doing it anyway.

[00:01:49.4] AT: Yeah, I remember that.

[00:01:51.3] JG: And it was crazy and sometimes people say, "I never believe this was going to turn into something," and you just start to really buy it sometimes like, "Yeah, you did. You knew it was going to."

[00:02:01.4] AT: That's right.

[00:02:02.9] JG: I was reading this biography about Jim Henson and somebody asked him, "Did you ever think you're going to be this successful?" And he said, "Yeah, I did. I know the humble answer is "no" but the truth is at an early age I knew I was going to do something great and I went for it," and I love that. I love the honesty of that.

[00:02:21.5] AT: But you're not Jim Henson.

[00:02:23.3] JG: I am not Jim Henson, no. So the story is this, last year and for several years our community of Tribe Writers kept asking me for a conference. They wanted a formal excuse to get together and hang out with each other and so after two years of dragging my feet, I said, "Okay, this is the year we're going to do it," and then I called a friend, Katie Strandlund, who was an event planner.

[00:02:47.7] AT: Yep, she's a pro.

[00:02:49.0] JG: Yeah and she's done some of our smaller events, workshops and that sort of thing and I said, "Hey, I've got three months to put together a conference, is that doable?" And she said, "Well it's not ideal but you can plan a conference in 90 days." I said, "Okay, let's do it," and the idea was if it didn't work, we spend at most 90 days failing at something we could move on versus something a year to plan it.

[00:03:11.8] AT: Right, you'll get one great blog post out of — *How I Failed At My First Conference*.

[00:03:16.3] JG: Right, yeah worth it. So it wasn't too short of a time basically that I wasn't setting myself up to fail. So basically we sold about 150 tickets in 30 days and then I engaged Katie, we started putting things together, I started booking speakers and 60 days out, we started selling tickets. We stopped selling tickets a month before the event and then the day of the event, 150 people showed up and it was great.

It wasn't perfect. I was seriously worried that it just wouldn't work. Like people wouldn't come or speakers wouldn't come. My biggest fear was that all my friends who were speakers, who had come to the event, who had given their time to come and speak that they would lose respect for me because it wasn't legit or something and then I was afraid that the attendees would go, "I want my money back," and neither of those things happened.

In fact I was there, you were there and I loved it. It was, as the event planner, as the person behind the curtains so to speak, you see all the flaws and even seeing all those things, I was amazed. I just thought, "Wow, this was great." It was a really wonderful thing and lots of people came up to me. We started selling tickets for the next year at the event and a third of the audience said, "I'm coming next year," and they bought a ticket.

[00:04:43.4] AT: Yeah like there, yeah.

[00:04:44.5] JG: Yeah so that was exciting. I felt like that was a pretty good metric for success that a third of the audience just bought their tickets, said, "I will figure it out and I'm coming next year," and lots of people came up to me and said, "This is the best conference I've been to," or, "This is the first conference I've been to and this exceeded my expectations."

So all that to say, my biggest fear is not falling short of that. We had a great first conference and that doing it again the next year, this year, it's going to be not as great. It's going to be sophomore slump.

[00:05:19.8] AT: Yeah, this is your sophomore album right here. Well, I think it's going to be, I remember Jars of Clay's second album is called *Much Afraid* and part of that is that they were afraid that there was sophomore slump and that was a great album. But the concern I think you have of quality is gone because you just look at the speakers and I know that he's a friend but also has tremendous respect for you as a professional and even I was like, "Wow, he got those people to say yes? Whoa, that's awesome," and I saw some of those people at Social Media Marketing World and they're like, "Oh yeah, I'll be at Tribe Conference," and I was like, "Great, wow. Cool, we don't have to take your picture down or cancel at the last minute," you know what I mean? So I want to talk about why you think it's going to be better than last year.

[00:06:11.7] JG: Yeah, so I have heard that too like people go, "Oh I'll see you at Tribe," and it's a thing, right? I'm not trying to fane humility, it still surprises me that this is a thing for people, that this is an event that people are coming to like I would say to you, "Are you going to the World Domination Summit? Am I going to see you there?" That's a thing and for me, it still feels like, "I hope it doesn't fail. This is just me and my friends putting something together and we're making it up as we go along but I'm more confident than ever in our ability to make it up."

So why is this going to be better? Bottom line, we just started earlier. We had Tribe Conference 1.0 2015 and that was a Saturday and Sunday conference and on Monday, I got together with my team. We had brunch and we started planning the next year. So we've been planning it for a year and we have been booking speakers, some of the people that couldn't come the first year are coming now. So it's going to be better because we're going to do the things that worked last time and we're going to not do things that didn't work.

But a few things that are going to be new is we're going to have new speakers and the Tribe Conference is kind of like a workshop for writers and creatives on how they can grow their audiences, how they can do their craft better, how they can build an audience, how they can figure out how to blog and do online marketing and ultimately, how they can make a living off of their message. And so it's the same process, it's the same four step process that we follow in the Tribe Writers course which is hone your voice, build your platform, expand your reach and then ultimately, how to go pro.

So that's the four step process and every year, we bring in new speakers who have their own messages to share but they represent an illustration basically, a different perspective on each of those steps and we've got new speakers, we've got some incredible speakers, Michael Port is coming, Shawn Coyne who is Steven Pressfield's editor, business partner.

[00:08:27.0] AT: Oh I didn't know he was coming?

[00:08:28.5] JG: He's coming. He's going to be talking about Story Grid, which is exciting.

[00:08:32.3] AT: Yeah, we've got some local flavor. Jeff Brown will be in the house.

[00:08:36.8] JG: Yeah he will be talking about podcasting.

[00:08:38.2] AT: I wonder if he is going to just like be behind a curtain. Because people are used to just hearing him. It might be awkward to connect a voice to a face but he's an attractive guy, so we've got Jeff Brown. It's interesting because it's not just for people who want to sit in their study and write. You've got public speaking, you've got podcasting, you've got a real variety of talent, if you will. So I'm excited because I know that I'm going to learn from different routes or alleys or different ways that you can go pro, if you will, and that's exciting.

[00:09:13.6] JG: Yeah and the vision behind the event is there are a lot of writing conferences where basically you go and you learn how to be a better writer and you learn how to get a publishing deal. And I don't have anything against those but they're a little bit behind the times when it comes to blogging, social media, online marketing and it's a 20 year old method for getting your words out there and those kinds of things.

Maybe there's a couple of self-publishing breakouts or like a "how to build your blog or workshop". But the main event is typically, I'm there to be a better writer and I need a literary agent and that path is fine but it's not the only way to get your words out there. So I didn't want to create another one of those and at the same time, I didn't want to create the next social media marketing world because that's great. That's a huge event talking about all the things that you can be doing to leverage social media.

But I saw an opportunity and I have sort of blended these two worlds together, writing and marketing, and I get to make a living off of that and it really came together with me, finding my voice and then sharing that voice with an audience and that's how I found my tribe and that's what we're trying to do here. We're trying to bring those two worlds together. So we've got my friend Marion Roach Smith who has been teaching the craft of writing memoirs for two decades now and has written and published a number of books and used to work for the New York Times and she's the smartest, best writer.

[00:10:46.8] AT: Yeah, whenever I see you two on public, it's almost like she becomes your Yoda and you're just sitting there like, "Just tell me what to do." You've always deferred her in a big way like, "Everybody here let's just listen to her," and I really think that I hadn't actually made that connection Jeff that there are writer's conferences, there are marketing conferences, there are social media conferences. This I think will be a really beautiful gumbo of all of those, right?

It's a nice mix of all those things and I think it comes out of how you teach people to create, which is out of your world view and Jeff your world view is, "Be a creative. Be great in what you create. Be wonderful, be diligent about your craft but don't be afraid to make some money so that you can continue to do that craft." And I think that's what's really empowering is that it's not just, "Hey, who cares how good you are, just be good at marketing". And it's not just be good at what you do and forget the marketing".

It's got to be both and that's what the Tribe Conference has become and I am excited to be there and to just see another great conference. Talk about the location why you like that location? I think it's pretty awesome, and then we'll talk about some deadlines and stuff.

[00:12:06.9] JG: Sure the location is at the factory in Franklin, Tennessee. Franklin is a small town, not really a suburb but a small town just outside of Nashville, Tennessee where I live and the factory is just that. It's an old textile factory or something in the middle of historic downtown Franklin, there was a civil war battle that was fought in Franklin. It is this small, quaint southern town in the middle of Tennessee and there's this old rehabilitated factory that's basically I guess it's kind of a mall. I don't think of it as a mall there's all these little boutique...

[00:12:46.0] AT: It's a lot of things, it's a local place, it's got restaurants, it's got a lot of things. It's just in a really cool building. Yeah, it's really amazing.

[00:12:55.0] JG: So I love that place. I go there for coffee and lunch and my wife went and made handmade pottery one time for a date there. So there's a lot of neat things going on there and I just thought, "Man, wouldn't it be cool to have an event here. To have a conference here in this space?" And there's a couple of event spaces there and we'll be using Liberty Hall this year, which is a beautiful amazing event space that we'll be hosting the conference at.

A really cool place. You can come to the factory and during breaks you can go get a great cup of coffee at Honest Roasters, you could get a cronuts at Five Daughters Bakery, which is the best donut in the world.

[00:13:35.1] AT: Yeah, you've eaten — I mean I've had my first one. Jody Maberry actually bought me my first donut from there, cronut whatever and I was like, "Hey man, thanks for this. These things are not cheap." He was like, "Yeah, it was like five bucks." But then I ate one and I was like, "I don't know that I've ever eaten something that's like five times mark up and I was happy about it." A normal donut is a buck and I was like, "That was five times as good as any normal donut."

But that's just one. There's all these great places. So you're at the factory, the dates for this are September 16, 17, 18, what are the days? Is that a Friday, Saturday, Sunday or?

[00:14:11.0] JG: Friday, Saturday, Sunday so we're going to kick things off Friday night at 7 o'clock. We're going to have an opening keynote. I'm going to welcome everybody and then we're going to have one of our speakers kick things off and we may or may not have some surprises that first night as well but that's going to be our kick off. Then Saturday, we're going to start at 9 o'clock and we'll go all day Saturday, nine to five basically, and you'll have the evening.

There'll be things going on but it we'll have speakers teaching and then Sunday, it will be nine to three and if you buy the premium ticket, you will have an opportunity to stay for a small group mastermind workshop from three to six and if you get the premium ticket, you will also have an

opportunity to participate in a private VIP meet and greet from five to seven before the event on Friday night.

So the normal ticket, you get Friday, Friday night, seven to nine, you have the kickoff and then Saturday and Sunday you'll see all the speakers and that's the standard ticket. The premium ticket, you get to come early and get to meet other premium attendees and get to meet some of the speakers and then you get to stay and a lot of people...

[00:15:26.6] AT: Just say it Jeff, just say, "You get to meet Andy."

[00:15:28.6] JG: You get to meet Andy, and then you get to stay afterwards and participate in a smaller group workshop. Last year we had 30 to 40 people and broke them up into groups of about eight to 10 people per table and they just went around and said, "Here's what I need to do, who can hold me accountable?" And I just featured a guest post from Sandy Kreps about this.

She was one of these people who came to the Tribe Conference and said, "I have spending two years trying to write my book," and she left the Tribe Conference with a group of people that were holding her accountable to getting it done and then in 90 days, she finished this book that she had been working on for two years." So that is the power of that accountability and just really the power of coming together with likeminded people who have important messages and stories to share with the world and I think I have struggled to find the right conference, the right event where I could find "my people" and the Tribe Conference is the closest thing I found to that.

I mean I created it because I'm good at writing events and I would go, "Yeah, how am I supposed to make money? Or what about blogging, or what if I don't want to work with a publisher, I can't find an agent?" Or I go to these blogging and social media conferences and I'd have questions about craft like, "How do I do this better?" And I don't have any problem with either those kinds of conferences, I just wanted to create something unique that wasn't necessarily competing with those but was speaking to some of those frustrations I felt.

Out of that came the Tribe Conference and it's not about marketing or making money or any of these single things, it's just about the holistic process of being a writer, of being a creative, of being a professional. Somebody who has a message to share with the world and there are important steps to that. You need to hone your voice, you've got to figure out why what you have to say is so unique and you need to have a platform.

You need to figure out how to reach new people and ultimately, you have to figure out how to get paid to do this thing whether that means through publishing books or releasing online courses or having ads on your podcast whatever it might be, you've got to figure out how to get paid to do this so that you can keep doing it and that's the process that we teach and last year, people loved it and this year, I think it's going to be even better and so I am really excited.

Andy as you know, one of my favorite things about this event is all the things that we're going to do that we haven't advertised, the surprise speakers, the surprises that just come, that we have planned that you guys won't see it coming and that's the most fun part for me about doing this. Last year in the middle of a long day on Saturday, we busted out popsicles for everybody. So there's a whole team of people that are thinking about, "How do we make this the best experience that you've ever had?"

And somebody asked me the other day, why do you do this and this is basically right now a breakeven event. Every dollar that we get for it, we put towards making the event amazing and I'm sure I can figure out some sort of strategic reason for how this fits into everything that I do but really, it's fun. It is super fun to create an experience that is literally life changing for people and to watch that happen before your eyes. We're having a ton of fun doing this and we're excited to have even more people come this year.

[00:18:56.5] AT: Awesome so there isn't a deadline for those who are listening to this. It's August 5th, it's a Friday, and the price goes up after that.

[00:19:06.0] JG: Right.

[00:19:06.4] AT: So that's the last chance for you to get the best price. It will be August 5th and then the ticket sales will be closed at some point. Part of that is just capacity, like you don't want

to have 30 people buy the day before and you're like, "Hey welcome, you have to stand for two days," right? So they don't show up with cash and be like, "Can I come to the party?" No you need to buy a ticket and that's Tribeconference.com, correct?

[00:19:30.0] JG: Yep, that's right and you'll see all the speakers. We've got a bunch of new speakers that we just added. We probably have a few more that we haven't advertised yet, so it's going to be great and last year, I said that "It's going to be great, I hope." This year I'm saying with confidence, "It was great last year. It's going to be amazing this year, you're not going to want to miss it."

I really believe it's not like any other events out there and it is the best of both worlds of, here's how to get better in sharing your message, get better at the craft of writing, learn how to podcast, learn how to blog, start an e-mail newsletter but get better at what you do, figure out how to tell a compelling story. lots of different speakers coming from different backgrounds who have fascinating skills and expertise to share and blending that with practical stuff, "Well how do I set up this thing today?" Andy we haven't talked about your role at the event. Do you want to share what you'll be doing?

[00:20:34.0] AT: Yeah, my wife and I recently took a trip to Chattanooga and we've never been to the area and you can just Google what you should do and things like that but my favorite thing to do is go to the front desk and say, "What should we do?" Because they live it, they know it, right? And I have the privilege and honor to be friends with a lot of people that have done great stuff, to be a partner with them, whether it's helping you hone and change Tribe Writers.

Or it's telling Mike Hyatt, "Hey, you should do a podcast," and him going, "Oh I will think about that." It's just fun stuff like that right or helping John walkthrough not being at the rams anymore. The point is that I have a lot of different areas that I have helped people with and I'm going to bring that to the conference and literally, I'm just going to sit there — I might just have to get the replay of all the conference stuff because I'm going to be there and I'm just going to be there to help.

So people are going to be able to schedule times with me and it's sort of ask me anything for those three days. You have to schedule a time and so they're stuck with some part of their

platform or technology or fear and then they're going to get some time with me. I might see if I can borrow my counsellor's couch because it might be like half sitting in front of your Mac to set up this and half will be like, "Let's just talk through the head game of being an entrepreneur."

But yeah, I'm going to be there just ready and willing to help and so I'm excited to have the opportunity. I appreciate you asking me to do that. So you're going to get inspiration and practical stuff from the stage. I know Convert Kit is going to be there and we're just going to be there to help people walk away with tremendous value and take action and that's the goal.

[00:22:12.0] JG: Yeah, I love that and I love that because, partly because it was my idea and partly because this doesn't happen at conferences. I love conferences but you go there, you get a bunch of inspiration and then it's on you to go apply it and you're great at this better than most at saying, "Okay, okay great." But I come to you with questions all the time, "But how do I use Scrivener?" Everybody is saying, "Here's why I need to use it," but what do I do once I open it or how do I use Evernote?

There's a hundred people saying, "Go use this tool," and there's one out of a hundred, one out of every thousand people like you saying, "Here's how to actually use the tool." And so what I love about this is this just you doing what you do best, which is just helping people get on start, helping them simplify complex confusing things and say, "Here's your next step," and so our goal at the Tribe Conference is that you're going to come, you're going to get inspired.

We're going to have lots of fun. I'm not one of those people who thinks just beating over the head with practical to-do lists all day long is even fun or something you'd want to come back. So there's inspiration, there's entertainment, it's going to be a good time but we want you to leave the event not with things to do but with things done and that's, no pressure Andy, but that's your role at the event.

[00:23:41.0] AT: Bring it on.

[00:23:41.7] JG: I think it's going to be a blast.

[00:23:42.8] AT: It's going to be great. It's going to be practical, inspirational, I don't know about possible goals, I don't know but if you don't bring a lot, I'll bring some and folks do check that out, tribeconference.com. Jeff, thank you for talking about the fears but also the promises of this year and we hope that you can make it. So check out tribeconference.com and I'll see you there. Jeff we'll see you there and folks, thanks again as always for taking time to listen today and thanks for your time Jeff.

[00:24:08.3] JG: Thank you.

[END OF DISCUSSION]

[00:24:16.8] AT: So where are you taking risks in your life? Where do you need to seek out risk? To leave your thoughts on this episode and also to easily share it with your friends, you can go to Goinswriter.com/114. If you've benefited from this podcast, please share it with a friend. I'm Andy Traub and on behalf of Jeff Goins, thanks for spending some time with us.

Now go build your portfolio.

[FINAL MESSAGE]

“**JG:** Our goal at the Tribe Conference is that you're going to come, you're going to get inspired, we're going to have lots of fun. I'm not one of those people who thinks just beating you over the head with practical to-do lists all day long is even fun or something you'd want to come back to. So there's inspiration, there's entertainment. It's going to be a good time but we want you to leave the event not with things to do but with things done.”

[END]